



February 26, 2023

**SUMMARY OF BILL:** Creates the *Veterans' Bill of Rights*. Requires the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to:

- Assist with concerns of small businesses owned and controlled by veterans and service-disabled veterans in obtaining loans from small business revolving loan funds, with a goal of seven percent of those loan funds reaching such businesses annually;
- Apply smart labor force data to direct veterans to in-demand fields by producing monthly electronic reports of workforce need projections;
- Increase the number of veterans taking advantage of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Military Skills Test Waiver Program;
- Coordinate with military placement and training programs, including the Department of Defense's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line program, and disseminate information on such programs;
- Take all necessary and appropriate steps to increase recognition of military training and experience toward in-state licensing in conjunction with applicable departments, agencies, and boards, review licensing practices of emergency medical technicians, paramedics, physician assistants, and nurses in this state;
- Develop and operate veteran navigator services to increase access to affordable healthcare coverage and services;
- Enhance and strengthen suicide prevention programs in coordination with local, state, and federal departments and agencies, and in consultation with nonprofit organizations and healthcare service providers; and
- Develop and implement a strategy to meet the goal of ending veteran homelessness within three years in coordination with local, state, and federal departments and agencies, and in consultation with nonprofit organizations.

Requires public institutions of higher education to grant academic credit to veterans for courses completed during military training or service if such courses meet certain standards. Requires such institutions to increase flexibility in course registration to reflect veterans' needs. Requires certain academic accommodations to students called to active duty.

Requires the DVS to report finding and recommendations in accordance with this Act to the Governor and the General Assembly by February 1 of each year and publish such report on its website.

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

**Increase State Expenditures - \$1,879,100/FY23-24  
\$1,312,300/FY24-25 and Subsequent Years**

**Other Fiscal Impact – This legislation would result in significant additional state and local expenditures to provide veterans with additional resources; however, due to multiple unknown factors, any such increase cannot be reasonably estimated.**

### Assumptions:

- This legislation would result in a significant increase in state and local expenditures across various state government departments and political subdivisions of the state.
- Based on information from the Department of Veterans Services, this legislation would require two additional program monitor directors, ten additional veterans' outreach specialist-2 positions, and two additional support staff.
- There will be an increase in state expenditures of \$1,079,114 (\$799,000 salaries + \$235,310 benefits + \$20,800 supplies and travel + \$16,800 computers) in FY23-24.
- There will be a total increase in state expenditures of \$1,062,314 (\$799,000 salaries + \$235,310 benefits + \$20,800 supplies and travel in FY24-25 and subsequent years.
- The Department of Commerce and Insurance and the Department of Health can assist in helping veterans become more aware of aid in meeting credentialing requirements of the various professional and health-related boards, each utilizing existing resources.
- The Tennessee Higher Education Commission and Tennessee Board of Regents can help provide necessary guidance, utilizing existing resources.
- It is assumed that the Department of Education and the University of Tennessee System can utilize existing resources to provide veterans with greater access to degrees, certificates, and licenses.
- The Department of Economic and Community Development can provide any necessary guidance regarding small business development and business loans for eligible veterans, utilizing existing resources.
- The Department of Safety can provide guidance regarding expedited commercial driver license attainment for eligible veterans, utilizing existing resources.
- To preform the provisions of this legislation, a new technological system would need to be created at a one-time cost of \$800,000 in FY23-24 and a recurring maintenance cost of \$250,000 in FY24-25 and subsequent years.
- The total increase to state expenditures in FY23-24 will be \$1,879,114 (\$1,079,114 personnel + \$800,000 system).
- The total increase in state expenditures in FY24-25 and subsequent years will be \$1,312,314 (\$1,062,314 personnel + \$250,000 system).
- This legislation could result in an additional increase in state or local expenditures to provide veterans with access to additional resources. Due to multiple unknown factors, any such increase cannot be reasonably estimated.

- Any reports required to be created by DVS as a result of this legislation can be accomplished using existing staff and resources.

**CERTIFICATION:**

The information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Krista Lee Carsner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Krista Lee Carsner, Executive Director

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